HOW TO MAKE PLAYS

Howard Says the Coming Dramatist Will Be a Mechanic.

THE EVOLUTION OF A PLAY

He Does Much of His Work in Bed, and Acknowledges Some Obligation to Tobacco Smoke.

Bronson Howard, when not at his literary labors, is on the wing all the time. He is a wanderer on the face of the earth. He has been to many lands, from Alaska to Mexico, and from Honolulu to Russia. It is in consequence of this nomadic life that it is impossible to tell a connected narrative of the home existence of the dramatist. His home is wherever beats a human heart. His it is to appreciate, understand and recognize the impulses of men and women the world over, then to set down his studies in imperishable plays.

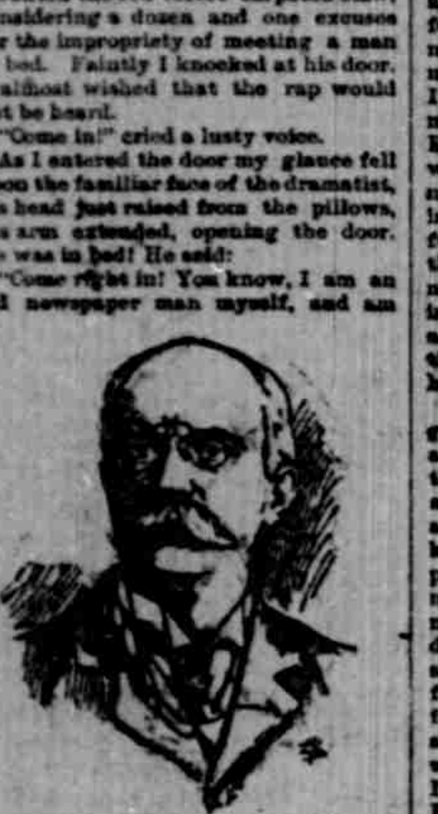
I think you would like Bronson Howard if you could but meet him. In this, though, the chances are against you. You stroll over to the Lotus club and ask his address; they respond that "Mr. Howard is out west somewhere." You drop in on Mr. Low, his friend in the steamboat business; he tells you: "Well, the last I heard from Mr. Howard he was out in—in Michigan, with his wards, but when he is coming back I do not know; he may come this very hour; then, again, he may not return for a year!" You step around to the depot, and are whirled out to that charming suburban retreat, New Rochelle, where at one time Mr. Howard lived in a snug home. "Why, isn't Mr. Howard in London?" suggests an astonished friend at the depot, as you return to town disappointed. "I understood that he was in London, you know."

In the face of this I think I would be justified in saying boldly, after the fashion of the bell boy, who took up my card—"Mr. Howard is in bed, but he says come right up just the same!" With many misgivings, I slowly mounted the red velvet carpeted stair, considering a dozen and one excuses for the impropriety of meeting a man in bed. Faintly I knocked at his door. I almost wished that the rap would not be heard.

"Come in!" cried a lusty voice.

As I entered the door my glance fell upon the familiar face of the dramatist, his head just raised from the pillows, his arm extended, opening the door. He was in bed! He said:

"Come right in! You know, I am an old newspaper man myself, and am



BRONSON HOWARD.

ever ready to meet my friends without standing on ceremony."

And so, as I said, Howard was lying in bed! There was a box of cigars on the bureau, which suggested to me what Mr. Howard calls "the smoking stage" of his work.

"You are working on a play now, are you not?"

The dramatist rolled uneasily in his bed, yawned softly behind his brown, strong hand and replied:

"Yes, I am at work on a play; I have been engaged in the effort for some time past. But it is too early yet to say just what sort of a play it shall be. How so? Well, I leave direct mention of the character of the piece to the managers. This is an invariable rule with me."

"What is the first process in evolving one of your plays?"

"It is what I call the 'smoking stage.' When I decide to write a drama, I go about it in a methodical manner. For weeks, yes months, I smoke and make notes. What the notes consist of I shall show you later. I spent the summer in Jackson, Mich., where I went to oversee my wards, more by my presence than otherwise. I had a den fitted up in one of the public office buildings, where I went each day to smoke and reflect on certain social conditions in which I am deeply interested; they are in some sort, not yet determined, to become part of the unwritten play."

"Where are all our 'lost dramatists,' Mr. Howard?" I asked.

"Where are they—well, I will ask you, where are they? I hear a great deal about lost dramatists. Now, these men are right down in front, so to speak; they have, we will assume, the literary training necessary for the dramatic art, or at least, something nearly allied thereto, akin to it. But they produce no plays! They produce no plays!"

As Mr. Howard said this I could see by the steely light that kindled in his deep-set, gray eyes that he was touched by the inspiration of a theme near and dear to his heart. There is something almost fierce about Bronson Howard's discourse at close range. It is difficult to warm him, but once his enthusiasm is awakened, he betrays long association with the stage and the drama by the dramatic fervor with which he addresses himself to his subject. Then it is that his voice rings in clear orotund qualities; his eyes snap, the lines of his face start and move in expressive mold, while, occasionally, one of hands will be stirred in nervous gesture. You cannot escape noticing that he at times sets his jaws with the sternness of a soldier, and then it is that you catch a fleeting glimpse of the indomitable will, the unvarying, tireless persistence of this man, who was content to wait some fifteen years for recognition long deferred! Filled with his subject, Bronson Howard, at this moment, rises partly in his bed, draws nearer to me, until he fairly glares in my face, the while talking in slow, almost labored sentences, thus:

"I tell you there are no lost dramatists! The fact that a man can write a clever novel, or a fine editorial, is, as I take it, the very reason why he cannot produce a play. In all English literature—and I have closely studied this theme—there is only one instance of a novelist, of national reputation, who ever produced even one enduring play of so high a rank as the fourth class! That man is Bulwer Lytton. Now then, if the geniuses in novelistic endeavor have produced nothing in several hundred years gone by, what conclusion is to be drawn?"

He paused and regarded me with an earnestness that was almost fierce, then proceeded:

"Now, then, I will tell you where all the so-called 'lost dramatists' have gone. A year ago as a member of the Prismatic club in Detroit, the conversation turned on this very theme. On

MR. HOWARD INTERVIEWED.

that occasion I had, among my auditors, an engineer, by name Mr. Henry. That man, who, by the way, had literary abilities, plied me with questions, listened intently to my responses, and, in a word, manifested an interest in the topic, an intelligent understanding thereof, mind to mind, man to man, such as I have never yet, in all my lifelong association with purely literary men, experienced! That was the breaking of a new light in my thought. Do you know what it was?

"Yes, sir; show me a man who has constructive ability of a high order, who dwells in fancy on buildings, machinery, mechanical appliances of all sorts, and I will show you one who, through force of circumstances,—provided always that he have the literary instinct—has slipped from the ranks of dramatists, where he rightly belongs, and has entered the field of applied forces. I do not believe that a literary man can write plays unless he have the mechanical gift. What do you think I admired at the world's fair? I spent my time in Machinery hall and in the Electrical building. From the time I was young I was largely interested in mechanics, and am so to this day. It is my idea that our playwriters of the future will be composed largely of those who, under other circumstances, might equally well have gained success in some engineering line. Of course, as I said, the requisite is that, in addition to the mechanical trend, the man have literary ability.

"I hold that in the future there will gradually rise up in the United States a school of dramatists, who will be as thoroughly devoted to their profession as are the highest grade of professionals to-day. There was a time, you know, when no one thought of writing plays, for in the endeavor there was neither money nor fame. I myself, in my life, have felt that blight. When I decided to enter the dramatic profession I talked the matter over with my father, and it was arranged that my father should be my backer; that I should receive such money as I needed until my plays would prove successful. I gave my notes for all funds advanced. For the next dozen years, I say boldly, I did not even pay expenses, but my good father stuck to me to the end. Then I began to see success ahead, and, finally, I turned a pretty sum; meantime my father had died, so that I had to pay his estate the money I had borrowed, with interest."

Bronson Howard never speaks of his father but in the tenderest and kindliest way, cherishing his memory as father, benefactor and patron.

Returning somewhat later, I found Bronson Howard awaiting me. He was clad in a gray business suit; he had

HOWARD'S DISORDERLY BUREAU.

taken his bath and looked as comfortable as was suggested by his greeting:

"Ah, what a bath does for one!"

Returning to the subject of playmaking, Mr. Howard said:

"As I told you before, I spend the first six months of play-construction in smoking and meditation. During that time I make notes on anything that, to my mind, possesses dramatic possibilities. It took me two years to think out 'The Henrietta,' while the writing of it occupied but six months. That is about my average division of time in making a play. If it were but my object to create a play with an effective plot, I could think out the yarn in three hours. The Chinese puzzle with me is to make the situations fit the characters and develop the plot.

"I never allow myself, in the 'smoking stage,' to write a line! I simply take rambling notes. Even what that theme is, to me, is vague, oftentimes, for weeks."

"You have your six months' work with you?"

Bronson Howard looked appealingly at his bureau. There was a jumble of the things there such as would have perplexed the heart of a tidy housewife. But not the heart of Howard! His eye ranged slowly over cigars, pencils, blotters, papers, collars, cuffs, matches, small change, paper money, keys, cuff buttons, telegraph blanks, and an indescribable mixture of neckties, cigarette boxes and perfume bottles. After much sorting and puzzling out he brought a small block of paper, the sheets in size about five by eight inches; from this mass, he selected not more than a dozen sheets, saying, as he scrutinized them closely:

"There, that represents three hundred cigars!"

It was six months' work for the dramatist. Taking up the first sheet and regarding it carefully, he explained its significance, thus:

"Now, then, this is a specimen of the way I begin work. I desire to write a drama, let us say. The first entry, as you see, is at the right-hand upper corner. It looks like '9 n 1,' but in reality it is 'G. N. No. 1,' meaning 'General Notes, Page No. 1.' Then there is a small line, meaning 'Note No. 1,' then a criss-cross and then these words: 'The Henrietta, Rosedale, School for Sc., and Drame de Societe.' Now, this all brings back to me these thoughts: To my mind the four plays here mentioned represent four great classes of a social character. I consider the possibility of each, and finally decide that my new play is to be a drama of society; further along you will see a small '2,' indicating 'Note 2;' the usual criss-cross is followed by the word 'or,' and then comes a note which in some fashion, just what I cannot as yet say, is to be duly incorporated in the new play, thus: 'The New Sexual Idea.' Let me explain this.

"Do you know that this world is rapidly passing in the direction of new and sensational ideas, concerning the sexual relations? No longer is woman kept in ignorance of the laws of nature; no longer is she educated to look upon marriage as her end in life. The professions, the business houses are being thrown open to her, and she is using her talents for her emancipation from the bondage of marriage. She is gradually learning to regard with indifference the contemptible cognomen of 'old maid.' Now this idea leads to the next, as set down in the notes under 'No. 3,' or '3' as you see it; that is, 'The Girl Bachelor.'"

"But where do you get your ideas?" I ventured, deeply interested.

"From the world; from travel; seldom from books. I have these ideas simply because I do not allow myself to step into my study and write a play, out of my inner consciousness, so to speak. I make it an invariable rule never to write a line till I have thoroughly developed the situations. That is the desired end! Not the plot, mind you, but the situations. You ask where I get my ideas. I will tell you how I came to write 'The Henrietta.' That will illustrate. You know it is a play of Wall street. I was going one day into the Lotos club, when I met a dear friend of mine named Meyers. He had a green patch over his eye. 'Hello, Meyers,' I said, 'what ails you?' 'Oh, nothing,' he responded. 'Got struck by something?' 'Oh, no, the eye is all right; it is only a drooping of the eyelid,' was his half-hearted response. 'The eye is all right,' he went on; then passing his hand pathetically over his forehead he added wearily: 'It is all here, Howard!' 'What!' I said, aghast. 'Wall street!' he said.

"'Wall street!' The words kept ringing in my ears. I was at work on a play at the time; I concluded to drop it and try to write of that terrible, remorseless fiend, speculation! Three months after, going again to the club, I saw a beautiful picture on an easel in a corner; I went up to it and regarded it attentively; there was a small card on the frame; I bended low to read the inscription, and started back as though struck by a blow. What I read was this:

"'Presented to the Lotos club by the late lamented Mr. Meyers.' Think of it, the late lamented Mr. Meyers—and in three months! That decided me. I went into Wall street myself. Day and night I haunted the place, seeking light on as fascinating a subject as ever appealed to human heart. I found two classes of workers in the street. One is all nerves, the other as cold as ice. I tell you Wall street represents the fiercest kind of gambling in the world."

Bronson Howard keeps all his notes, aside from the first drafts on the papers above alluded to, in small books, neatly bound in leather and ornamented with gilt tracings. He has them numbered with the letters of the alphabet. He has already scribbled up enough books to reach "G." In these, he keeps all sorts of information, one item after another, in the most perplexing fashion—to any but the dramatist himself.

Odd and disjointed as these note books may seem, to the dramatist they suggest mines of wealth, one day to be dug up and hammered into the pure gold in some drama of life. For twenty-three years now this man has been working for the cause of dramatic art. As founder and president of the American Dramatists' club Mr. Howard was, the other day, presented by fifty gentlemen with a magnificent silver loving cup. Mr. David Belasco gave the banquet. In small wreaths of laurel are the names of Mr. Howard's best known plays—"Saratoga," "The Banker's Daughter," "Old Love Letters," "Young Mrs. Winthrop," "The Henrietta" and "Aristocracy." On the cup is a design bearing the two traditional masks, symbolic of the stage, while near by is an American shield, over which rises the sun—the rising sun of American dramatic art.

To Bronson Howard and the rising sun—all hail!

JOHN HUBERT GREUSEL.

A CHIEF WITHOUT A TRIBE.

How Wild Hog's Band of Cheyennes Was Exterminated in 1879.

Wild Hog is the name of a Cheyenne chief, albeit he is a chief without a tribe. About 14 years ago his name was known throughout the United States, and for weeks millions of people looked in the morning papers daily to see what he was doing. For a time he filled western Kansas and Nebraska with terror. Now he resides at Pine Ridge agency and is one of the poorest and most dilapidated Indians on the reservation.

In January, 1879, Wild Hog and the tribe of Cheyenne Indians of which he was chief were removed to the Indian Territory. Becoming dissatisfied with their new homes, they broke out, and under the leadership of Wild Hog struck out northward through Kansas and Nebraska. Many depredations were committed on the way. The Indians killed about 40 citizens, outraged 10 women and destroyed nearly $40,000 worth of property. Wild Hog always claimed that this deviltry was the work of a few young bucks who were beyond his control and that they escaped to the reservation. During the flight northward the United States army was always about one day behind the Indians.

Finally Wild Hog and about 200 warriors, together with their women and children, went into Fort Robinson and surrendered. Inducements were offered the Indians to return to the Indian Territory, but they refused to do so. Finally they were disarmed, but in the effort to do so several soldiers and more Indians were killed. Wild Hog was put in irons and confined in the guardhouse. The other Indians, including their wives and children, were confined in a long, low log building which had previously been used as barracks. Upon their continued refusal to go back peaceably to the Indian Territory an effort was made to subdue them by starvation. They were deprived of food, water and fuel and closely guarded. But they were tough, and even after several days, which must have been ones of suffering, were still obdurate. It was supposed that they were completely disarmed, but in some manner they had been able to retain a few revolvers.

After a few days of seemingly quiet subjection the vigilance of the soldiers was in a measure relaxed and the guard reduced to six in number. Suddenly in the night these were shot down, every one of them being killed outright or disabled. The Indians then rushed out and fled up Soldier Creek canyon. The breaks and hills of Pine Ridge were about half a dozen miles away, and it was the hope of the Indians to reach them before the sleeping soldiers could overtake them. It was a wild race across the ice and snow. Many of the Indians were barefooted and left a trail of blood. Encumbered with their women and children, they made slow progress.

The garrison, aroused by the shots that destroyed the guards, were soon in pursuit. Captain Wessel of the Third cavalry was in command. They came upon the Indians in a little ravine, or coolie, about two miles north of the fort. They made a stand and fought bravely, but were without arms, and the rifles of the cavalry made short work of them. After the soldiers had exhausted all their ammunition there were but a few live Indians, and these were charged upon and cut down with the sword. Wild Hog's tribe was entirely wiped out. Not a man, woman or child was left of the entire band. But Wild Hog was safely locked up in the guardhouse at Fort Robinson, and that is how he comes to survive—a chief without a tribe.—St. Louis Republic.

Curious Old Letters.

According to the thirteenth report of the historical manuscripts commission, the commissioners found in the collection of Sir W. Fitzherbert an unusually curious and interesting set of documents, evidently the original letters of the secret correspondence between the courts of France and England during the reign of Charles II. The only ciphers, as a rule, made use of were certain numbers in the place of names. The body of each letter seems to have been written in an ordinary hand with sympathetic ink, probably with lemon juice, as is suggested by Coleman himself in a letter of his printed in the state trials, which, having once been brought to light, is still legible, though oftentimes faint.

Sometimes the whole of a letter has been written in this light brown ink. Sometimes the secret writing occurs as a part only of a letter, of which the rest is written in common black ink upon ordinary, harmless topics. Sometimes it appears as interlineations throughout a letter written with common black ink. In order to bring out these characteristics as far as possible, these 20 letters have been copied line by line, as in the originals, italics being used to represent the common black ink and the usual type being used to represent those portions which are written with the sympathetic ink.—London Globe.

A London View of Us.

There are few women in the far western districts of America, and therefore the male population are bachelors of necessity. The other day a ranchman known as Alkali Ike rode up to the open door of a cottage and without dismounting said: "How are you, Widder McNabb? Nice weather we're havin. Will you be my wife, Mrs. McNabb?" "What do you mean?" expostulated the indignant Mrs. McNabb. "I'm not a widow. Where's Jim?" Alkali Ike looked at his watch. "Let's see," he said; "half past 4. The reform committee started for the pine forest with Jim at five minutes to 8. They probably gave him 10 minutes before slingin him up to a tree bough. If there wasn't any hitch in the programme Jim's been hangin about eight minutes. Wish you'd give me an answer as soon as possible, widder, for the chairman of the committee was goin to start for here to ask you to be his wife as soon as he could put on a clean collar. Took it to the tree in his pocket, and if he didn't lose his collar button down his back he's just about a quarter of a mile from here now."—London Telegraph.

Newspaper Enmities.

Mr. Murat Halstead, writing in "The Making of a Newspaper" about his early editorial experiences, speaks of Charles Hammond of the Cincinnati Gazette as the Ohio editor who was paramount in the forties and fifties. He was a Whig, an ardent supporter of Henry Clay and in general a very dignified and severe sort of man. Mr. Halstead tells one story, however, which shows that he must have had other qualities.

Mr. Hammond and Robert T. Lytle, the most accomplished Democrat of his day in Ohio, had been out together on a long walk, when it occurred to the editor of The Gazette that he was expected to furnish a leader for the next day and must make haste to do so.

Lytle, loath to part with such good company, followed him, making an unaccustomed appearance in a Whig office. The shades of night were falling fast. Lytle patiently held a candle while Hammond wrote rapidly for almost an hour, when, with an expression of gratification that his work was well done, he thanked his friend for his polite and gracious attention, called a printer, handed him the copy, mentioned that he did not care to see the proof, and the two distinguished gentlemen resumed their promenade and finished the festival.

The next day it occurred to Lytle to look into The Gazette and see what had been produced by the pen of a ready writer while he held the candle, and to his surprise and disgust that gradually became amusement he found that it was a very bright, and he thought extravagantly overdone, though not absolutely malicious, assault upon himself, in which his shortcomings as a politician were unsparingly reviewed, but his personal cleverness admitted with a funny pretense of reluctance.

What is reputed to be the largest diamond in the world is in the possession of Jagersfontein, a Mexican. He claims that the stone weighs 972 carats.

AMUSEMENTS.